

Banbridge Academy gains national recognition for high quality learning in Religious Education.

On the 11th December the Religious Studies department at Banbridge Academy was awarded the GOLD award for the national RE Quality Mark. This is a first for the school and indeed for Northern Ireland.

The REQM award recognises outstanding learning in Religious Education. Schools can achieve a bronze, silver or gold award. It looks at five areas – Learners and Learning, Teachers and Teaching, Curriculum, Subject Leadership and Continuing Professional Development. Banbridge Academy was rated GOLD in all five areas.

Mr Warren Brown, Head of Religious Studies at Banbridge Academy commented that *“Pupils and staff responded positively to the process and indeed the outcome. It has allowed us to celebrate the good practice in our department and for us all to recognise the value of the subject in supporting the aims and ethos of the school and in contributing to the spiritual and moral development of our pupils. The award gives us confidence to continue with what we are doing well and the process has provided opportunity to evaluate our practice, to ensure our contribution to whole school issues like Literacy, ICT and Teaching and Learning continues.”*

Mr Raymond Pollock, Principal of Banbridge Academy, in congratulating the Religious Studies Department described the award as a *“tremendous achievement for the school which recognises outstanding practice in RE.”*

An important part of the REQM is that an assessor visits the school and talks to the learners about their experiences in RE. These are some of the things which Banbridge Academy students had to say:

“My favourite thing about RE is the fact that we as a class can learn in an unbiased environment, where everyone's opinion counts as equal. We learn about different beliefs a lot. This is very interesting because these beliefs can help us understand our environment.”

“I like the discussions and debates because it gives us the chance to talk about things we may not be able to talk about anywhere else.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed our educational visits such as to the Crumlin Road Gaol, and our trip to Poland...RE focuses on topics that are relevant to issues today, it helps us to have an open mind and respect other people's opinions.”

The REQM Gold Award will enable the school to drive forward the message that they are committed to ensuring the provision of high quality R.E. by actively engaging learners in their studies and by challenging them to relate their exploration of Religion to local, national and global issues.